

VZCZCXRO8652
RR RUEHAG RUEHDF RUEHIK RUEHLZ RUEHROV
DE RUEHDL #0122 0671455
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 071455Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8961
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHBL/AMCONSUL BELFAST 0696

UNCLAS DUBLIN 000122

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EI](#)
SUBJECT: Irish Taoiseach lauds Northern Ireland's Ian Paisley

REF: BELFAST 36

¶1. (U) In the wake of Northern Ireland Assembly First Minister Ian Paisley's surprise announcement that he would stand down as First Minister in May 2008, Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Bertie Ahern released a statement on March 4 paying tribute to Paisley, referring to him as a giant figure in the history of Ireland. Ahern spoke of how he valued his practical and friendly working relationship with Paisley and of his respect for Paisley as a man who worked tirelessly for the people he represented and who had sincerely done what he believed was right. Ahern said that the leadership Paisley had shown in recent years meant that future generations of Irish people, North and South, would live in a peace and prosperity that previous generations could only dream of.

¶2. (U) On March 5, speaking before the Dail (the lower house of the Irish parliament), Ahern reiterated his praise, calling on Members of the Dail to reflect on the huge courage and leadership Paisley showed in recent years and the legacy of peace and hope that he will leave for future generations.

¶3. (SBU) In a subsequent conversation with Rita O'Hare, Sinn Fein's General Secretary, O'Hare told POLOFF that she respected Paisley as a man of conviction and of his word. She expressed concern that a leadership struggle within the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) might unsettle operations of the Northern Ireland Assembly Executive and complicate negotiations for the devolution of policing and justice. She indicated that Finance Minister Peter Robinson, if chosen as the next First Minister by the DUP, would be a DUP leader with whom Sinn Fein could easily work.

FOLEY